
Teresa A. Toulouse. *The Captive's Position: Female Narrative, Male Identity, and Royal Authority in Colonial New England*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006. 225p.

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Teresa A. Toulouse's *The Captive's Position: Female Narrative, Male Identity, and Royal Authority in Colonial New England* is a fascinating book that examines the political, religious, and cultural utilization of the genre of the captivity narrative from 1682-1707. Toulouse makes a convincing argument that the political instability in England brought about by the Restoration of Charles II to the English throne in 1660 and the Glorious Revolution of 1688, the continuing wars of succession in Europe, and the ever-increasing generational conflicts over religious and secular authority in the American colonies all contribute to a cultural climate in which Indian captivity narratives are ubiquitously published, republished, appropriated, and re-appropriated. The primary figures in these battles of appropriation explored by Toulouse are Cotton Mather, and to a lesser extent John Williams, as both attempt to use the metaphor of captivity to reconcile and consolidate the position of the New England colonies in relationship to English monarchical authority, as well as to strengthen their own positions as third-generation New England religious leaders, particularly in relationship to the "fatherly" authority of earlier generations.

Three central narratives are discussed at length in this work: Mary Rowlandson's, Hannah Dustan's, and Williams' own account of his captivity among both Indians and French Catholics. The narrative of Hannah Swarton, of which Toulouse states, "scholars have suggested was probably in large part written by Mather himself" (92), is covered as well, but in less detail. Toulouse also closely examines Mather's *Judea Capta, Decennium Luctuosum*, and various written sermons in which he makes use of the narratives of Dustan and Swarton, as well as the overall trope of female captivity. From the outset of the project, Toulouse makes it clear that the focus of her examination is not specifically on the narratives, but on their use: "Rather than reading the female captive's *experience* in the wilderness... this argument considers late seventeenth-century attitudes toward the English born fathers and toward Europe resonant in the *representations* of captivity and wilderness used by American-born ministers" (11).

The crux of Toulouse's argument concerning these representations can be discovered first in the term "ambivalence," and later in the concept of "seduction" in Williams' narrative. Toulouse quotes from *The Language of Psychoanalysis* by J. Laplanche and J.B. Pontalis in critically defining ambivalence, "as referring to specific conflicts in

which the positive and negative of emotional attitude are simultaneously in evidence and inseparable” (12).

The well-known narrative of Mary Rowlandson is considered first, and at the beginning of chapter 2, Toulouse provocatively wonders, why “an elite woman’s text about her Indian captivity becomes directed to interlinked theological, political and social ends by second-generation ministers” (21). Toulouse points to the conflicts faced by second-generation and, later, third-generation ministers and sons who felt a strange ambivalence toward their first-generation “fathers” and what they stood for, particularly following the Restoration of 1660 and then “the loss of the original Massachusetts charter in 1685” (2). “The Rowlandson text productively comes to serve the multiple ends of expressing their filial loyalty and their desire to separate, their orthodoxy and their unwitting ‘Indianization,’ their fantasied passivity and fantasied violence” (72).

According to Toulouse, this familial conflict amongst the New England elite only increased in the subsequent generations. Toulouse examines Cotton Mather and his “(re)turn to the figure of the captive woman” (76), and his use of an “adaptable rhetoric” (77), particularly in his treatment of the captivity of Hannah Dustan. Mather, according to Toulouse, is attempting to equate New England and its humiliation and need for repentance in the 1690s with the figure of the female captive, whose experiences were often described in a similar fashion. The particulars of Dustan’s captivity, however, hardly offer the model attitudes of female virtue, patience, and repentance that seem to fit the bill of Mather’s rhetorical aims; Dustan and her companions killed ten of their captors, and Dustan herself reportedly returned and scalped them in order to collect the bounties offered by Massachusetts authorities (86). Toulouse once again posits ambivalence as the central motivation drawing Mather to Dustan’s unsavory and somewhat unwieldy narrative, suggesting that he, and others, possessed “the desire at once to denigrate and destroy *and* to uphold the New England of the ‘fathers’” (100).

Cotton Mather serves also as the transitional figure in the book, as his dispute with a royal governor of Massachusetts, Joseph Dudley, is used to introduce John Williams’ *The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion*. The critical focus of Toulouse’s book changes as she turns her attention to Williams. He writes of his own captivity, but he “alters...the narrative of the orthodox female captive” (141) by giving it a male focus. According to Toulouse, this alteration has significant consequences: “Central to this move that at once connects and disconnects his text to other Mather-supported captivity narratives...is the way in which Williams structures captivity as less about bodily afflictions and physical threat from Indians...than as an almost explicitly sexualized seduction and temptation story in which the *male* colonial plays

the central role” (141). Toulouse carefully examines Williams’ narrative, as well as his sermon given after his release, *God in the Camp*, and suggests that the concept of seduction takes on a complexity similar to ambivalence. For Williams, seduction lurks not only amongst his Indian and French Catholic captors, but also in “the ‘new world’ of New England” (151) for those who are restored to freedom but are seduced away from God. In this way, Toulouse believes, Williams, like Cotton Mather, “stunningly reveals the complicated emotional machinery by which certain third-generation New Englishmen could simultaneously maintain their loyalty to tradition and negotiate the reality of difference from the ‘fathers’” (161).

The Captive’s Position: Female Narrative, Male Identity, and Royal Authority in Colonial New England is a remarkably well-researched work that addresses in great detail the historical and cultural contexts in which these captivity narratives were produced. Yet for all of the historical data and cultural background, the text is very readable and the arguments are clear. The drawback to including such an extensive amount of historical and cultural material, however, is in the fact that far less of the actual narratives are quoted than one would expect. In some places the reader might feel as though this were a literary biography of Cotton Mather, but Toulouse effectively uses Mather, and to a lesser extent others, to stake out her unique claims about the appropriation and use of captivity narratives. This work makes a significant contribution to the study of captivity narratives by further explaining the political and cultural contexts in which this most popular of colonial genres thrived. ✱